Volume 1
Chapter 5

I'M LATE IN NOTICING THIS, BUT MY BIGGEST PROBLEM SEEMS TO BE MY LOW LEVEL
BUT EVEN IF I LEVELED UP SOME, I WILL STILL ONLY BE A FORMER NEET WITH A SLIGHTLY HIGHER LEVEL, AND NOT SOME CHOSEN HERO
MY STATS DON'T INCREASE AS MUCH WITH A LEVEL-UP EITHER
I MUST HAVE BEEN OUT OF MY MIND WHEN I SAID I'D SEARCH THE WORLD FOR PAPAS' HOME TOWN
BESIDES, IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT, I'M ALREADY HAVING THIS MUCH TROUBLE IN SOME SMALL CAVE NEARBY

I'D EVEN MANAGED TO COME UP WITH SOME EXCUSE TO STOP MY DAILY PUSH-UP ROUTINE
BEFORE I KNEW IT, I'D STOPPED GOING TO THE CAVE ALTOGETHER
THE HARSH WINTER COLD THAT HAD SETTLED IN WASN'T REALLY HELPING MY MOTIVATION EITHER
SNIFF SNIFF
CHOO OOO!!
AHHH
SIGH ...
DAMN, IT'S COLD
I WAS ABOUT TO RETURN TO THE LIFESTYLE OF A BONFIRE NEET...
SFX CRACKLE

THE RIVER HAS FROZEN OVER AND I CAN'T EVEN KILL TIME WITH BOAT MAINTENANCE ANYMORE
WINTER DOESN'T LOOK LIKE IT'LL BE ENDING ANYTIME SOON
.....
SUDDENLY, I FIND MYSELF LEFT WITH NOTHING TO DO BUT TAKE LONG STROLLS THROUGH THE FEW REMAINS OF THE VILLAGE

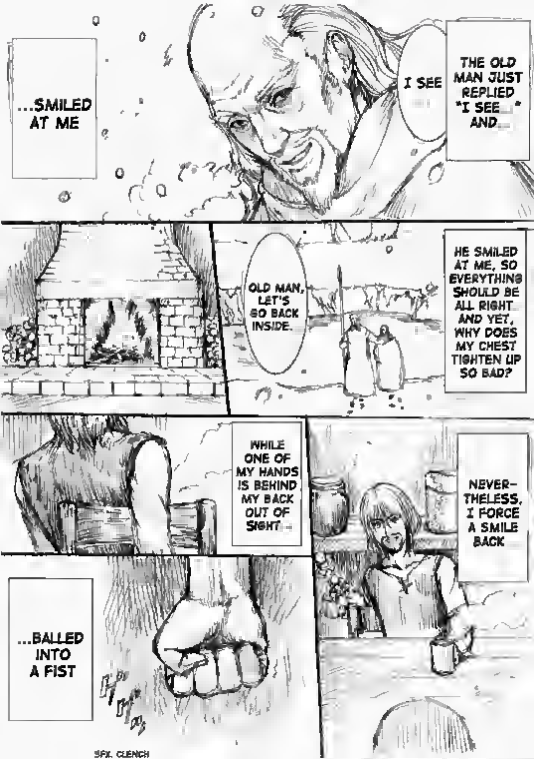
THE GRAVES HAVE BEEN IN A SORRY STATE AS I'VE BEEN NEGLECTING THEM SINCE THE COMING OF WINTER
EVERYTIME I SEE THEM, I THINK TO MYSELF THAT IT'S ABOUT TIME I DID SOMETHING ABOUT THEM
BUT THEN I END UP POSTPONING IT TO TOMORROW FOR SOME STUPID REASON...
LIKE HOW I CAN'T DO IT BECAUSE I FORGOT TO BRING ANY TOOLS WITH ME TODAY
AND WHEN TOMORROW COMES, I POSTPONE IT TO THE NEXT DAY AND SO ON IT GOES
I REALLY NEED TO BREAK THIS VICIOUS CYCLE OR I'LL SOON BE RIGHT BACK TO WHERE I STARTED OUT A LONG TIME AGO

I WONDER WHAT HE'D SAY IF HE KNEW HOW I'VE BEEN WASTING MY DAYS LATELY
COUGH
COUGH
THE OLD MAN DOESN'T GET OUT OF BED THESE DAYS. HE SAYS THE COLD MAKES HIS BACK AND JOINTS HURT
AND HE LOOKED SO HAPPY WHEN I TOLD HIM I'D FOUND MYSELF A GOAL...
OKAY...
SFX: CLUNK
SFX: SST
DO YOU WANT SOME TEA?
OW OW OW
DINNER IS READY
OLD MAN, WAKE UP

SFX: STEAM
OW OW HOT
SLOW
SLOW
YEAH... THANKS... I WAS JUST GETTING THIRSTY TOO...
I JUST CAN'T WAIT TO HAVE DINNER...
UH, NO
IS SOMETHING THE MATTER?
I'M SURE YOU'LL LIKE TODAY'S DINNER...
AFRAID OF LOOKING HIM IN THE EYES, I'VE BEEN AVOIDING THE OLD MAN WHENEVER POSSIBLE

ONE DAY, THE OLD MAN CAME OUTSIDE, WHICH HE HADN'T DONE IN MONTHS
OLD MAN!
YEAH... I FEEL GREAT TODAY
IS IT OKAY FOR YOU TO GET OUT OF BED?
AND HOW ARE THINGS ON YOUR SIDE?
I WAS CAUGHT OFF GUARD BY HIS RATHER NORMAL QUESTION AND DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO ANSWER
!!

I'VE BEEN PRETENDING TO EXPLORE THE CAVE WHEN, IN FACT, I'VE BEEN ONLY MAKING A BONFIRE INSTEAD—
EVER SINCE THE OLD MAN BECAME ALMOST COMPLETELY BEDRIDDEN AND STOPPED GOING OUT ALTOGETHER
M.. ME!?
SFX: THUNK
THEN, AT THE END OF THE DAY, I'D JUST RANDOMLY COVER MY EQUIPMENT WITH DIRT—
OR SIMPLY KILLING TIME SOME-WHERE ELSE OUTSIDE
AND RETURN TO THE HUT LOOKING LIKE I'D BEEN ADVENTURING ALL DAY
THI THINGS ARE JUST GREAT!!


...SMILED AT ME
I SEE
THE OLD MAN JUST REPLIED "I SEE..." AND...
OLD MAN, LET'S GO BACK INSIDE.
HE SMILED AT ME. SO EVERYTHING SHOULD BE ALL RIGHT. AND YET, WHY DOES MY CHEST TIGHTEN UP SO BAD?
WHILE ONE OF MY HANDS IS BEHIND MY BACK OUT OF SIGHT...
NEVER-THELESS, I FORCE A SMILE BACK
...BALLED INTO A FIST
SFX. CLENCH

BUT I DON'T LET ANY OF IT SHOW ON MY FACE. INSTEAD...
SEEING THE OLD MAN SMILE AT ME MAKES ME FEEL MORE AND MORE PATHETIC
I WEAR MY FRAUDULENT SMILE LIKE A MASK IN A DESPERATE MANNER WITH THE SOLE PURPOSE OF DECEIVING THE OLD MAN
I'M THE WORST!
AND THE OTHER DAY, I LANDED A CRITICAL HIT ON A METAL SLIME. CAN YOU IMAGINE THAT!?
I'M THE WORST!
REMEMBER THAT WEIRD BEAR I TOLD YOU ABOUT LAST TIME? I CAN KILL IT WITH ONE HIT NOW!
I'M THE WORST!
I'VE GOTTEN QUITE STRONG LATELY, Y'KNOW?
I'M THE WORST!

...ISN'T IT ENOUGH ALREADY?
!!?
SFX: CRACKLE
OLD MAN...
SO YOU KNEW?

KNOW WHAT?
OH..?
UH
I'VE BEEN HAD
HE'D SEEN THROUGH MY LIES ALL ALONG
WHAT DID YOU THINK I MEANT?
I THINK THERE WAS A MISUNDERSTANDING BECAUSE WHAT I MEANT WAS, "HAVEN'T YOU DRAGGED ENOUGH ALREADY?"

DON'T WANT TO TELL ME ABOUT IT, HUMP
HMM
LET ME TELL YOU A STORY INSTEAD THEN...
I'M GONNA BECOME SO RICH I'LL HAVE MY OWN CASINO IN ORACLE-BERRY!!
I'M GONNA BECOME A RICH MER-CHANT!!
EVER SINCE HE WAS A KID, HE DIDN'T LIKE THE IDEA OF SUCCEEDING A SMALL BOAT RENTAL
I HAD A SON ONCE, AND TRUST ME, HE WAS NOTHING BUT TALK
...IS ALL HE USED TO GO ON ABOUT

MY SON SUDDENLY HEADED TO ORACLE-BERRY TO WORK THERE...
I'M GONNA GO TO A CITY AND MAKE A NAME FOR MYSELF!
UNTIL ONE DAY HE WAS ABOUT THE SAME ABE AS YOU, I THINK
SOMEONE LIKE THAT CAN'T POSSIBLY FIND A JOB IN A BIG CITY LIKE THAT ALL HE COULD DO WAS WORK PART-TIME ALL THE TIME
HE WAS ALREADY 30, BUT HE WAS STILL A KID WHO'D NEVER HAD TO WORK HARD FOR ANYTHING IN HIS LIFE
BEFORE TOO LONG, HE'D STARTED TAKING LOANS AND ACCUMULATING DEBTS UNTIL HE EVEN CAME TO ME FOR MONEY
HIS INCOME WAS AS LOW AS IT GETS
AND AS IF THAT WASN'T ENOUGH, HE DREAMED OF MAKING A FORTUNE THE EASY WAY AND GOT ADDICTED TO GAMBLING
PEOPLE ALWAYS SAY THE SAME THINGS WHEN THEY BEG FOR MONEY

HUH? THE NEW STORE? IT'S GOING GREAT! I'M SO BUSY YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE! GOOD THING YOU ASKED THOUGH! I WANNA BUY NEW STOCK, SO COULD YOU...
LOOK, I'M GONNA OPEN A NEW STORE AND I'M TRYING TO RAISE MONEY FOR IT!
I COULD TELL WITH JUST ONE LOOK AT HIS FACE
HE WAS OBVIOUSLY LYING THROUGH HIS TEETH
WANT TO KNOW WHY? WHENEVER MY SON LIED TO ME, HE MADE A FACE MUCH LIKE THE ONE YOU'RE MAKING RIGHT NOW...
THE FACE A MAN MAKES WHEN HE'S LYING TO HIMSELF

THEN WHY... IF YOU KNEW I WAS LYING...
SFX: CLENCH
...
...
BUT I KNOW ALL TOO WELL THAT LYING HURTS THE LIAR THE MOST
WELL, I DO FEEL SAD THAT YOU'RE LYING TO ME
YOU'LL HAVE TO LIE AGAIN AND AGAIN TO COVER UP YOUR PREVIOUS LIES
AND ONCE YOU'VE TOLD YOUR FIRST LIE
WITH EVERY LIE, IT GETS MORE AND MORE DIFFICULT

UNTIL YOU GET SWALLOWED UP WHOLE BY YOUR OWN LIES ONE DAY
I COULDN'T SAY ANYTHING IN RETURN
YOU JUST KEEP FALLING, LOWER AND LOWER, FOR THE REST OF YOUR DAYS
THAT IS WHEN YOU REALIZE THAT YOU'VE LONG PASSED THE POINT OF NO RETURN
FROM THEN ON—

OLD MAN
IN THE END, MY SON WAS CRUSHED BY HIS DEBTS AND...
ENDED UP A DRUG-ADDICTED CRIPPLE
BUT DON'T WORRY, I'M NOT GOING TO TELL YOU HOW TO LIVE YOUR LIFE. YOUR LIFE IS YOURS TO DECIDE
THAT'S IT. THE STORY OF HOW MY SON WASTED HIS LIFE AND NOTHING I SAY NOW CAN CHANGE IT

CONSIDER IT THE RAMBLINGS OF AN OLD MAN IF YOU WANT, BUT LET ME TELL YOU JUST THIS ONE THING
I HAVE TO TELL YOU ONE THING THOUGH
SFX: PULL
SFX: PAT
I DON'T MIND IF YOU GIVE UP ON A GOAL YOU HAD SET FOR YOURSELF EITHER--
I DON'T MIND IF YOU DECIDE TO LIVE A QUIET LIFE IN THIS VILLAGE .
DO WHATEVER YOU WANT, BUT JUST DON'T LIE TO YOURSELF!!

IF YOU FEEL EVEN A LITTLE THAT YOU DON'T WANT TO GIVE UP AFTER ALL...
IF THERE'S THE SLIGHTEST DOUBT IN YOUR HEART ABOUT GIVING UP THAT GOAL...
THEN YOU'D BETTER DAMNED WELL SEE IT THROUGH UNTIL THE END!!
THAT'S ALL I WANTED TO SAY.

THE OLD MAN WENT TO BED AFTER THAT
I...
I...

SFX: BANG
SFX: CLATTER
SFX: FWOOOSH
I...
OHHH
HHHHH
HHHHH
HHHH

Appendix:

Characters in chapter 5:

Baki

Papas (Pankraz)

Boat man

Mansters in chapter 5:

Slime

Owlbear

Metal Slime

Lacatians in chapter 5:

- Santa Rasa (Whealbrook)
- Oracleberry (Fortuna)